(c) Since wheat in the country is mostly produced and procured in the Northern States. It has to be transported to the Southern States as per the requirement of TPDS and Other Welfare Schemes. All the wheat transported by the FCI to Southern States is through the Railways. The rates of rail freight are determined by the Ministry of Railways.

(d) Action has been taken to reduce the cost of transportation by employing linear programming module to determine the least cost linkage from laoding stations to unloading stations.

Wheat import

2929. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to import 5 lakh tonnes of wheat this season to augment food security, subject to review of the situation in May, if more is required to be imported; and

(b) the estimated indigenous production of wheat this year, as compared to the last two years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. In addition to import of 5.00 lakh tonnes of wheat, the Government has authorized the State Trading corporation to import 30 lakh tonnes of wheat to augment the food security.

(b) As per the Third Advance Estimates of Foodgrains Production for 2005-06 (as on 5.5.2006), the indigenous production of wheat is estimated to be 71.54 Million Tonnes in 2005-06 as compared to 72.15 Million Tonnes during 2003-04 and 68.64 during 2004-05.

Production and import of wheat

2930. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the production of wheat is expected to be less than the target during 2005-06;